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ABSTRACT

A description is provided of the Field-Based Curriculum Leadership Training Program at Pittsburgh State University. The purpose of the program is to help establish a new type of working relationship between the university and local schools in the area of curriculum development. Three program phases are outlined. The first consists of a series of administrative training sessions that focus on sharpening the curriculum leadership. The second phase consists of a series of training sessions for the informal leadership of the district. The third--the implementation stage--involves both previous training groups in guiding other staff members in solving local curriculum problems. The program focuses on developing curriculum development skills, group process skills, informal power, communication skills, and the processes involved in the adoption of new ideas, as well as time management. (DS)

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DEVELOPING CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP WITHIN OUR SCHOOLS

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Developing Curriculum Leadership Within Our Schools

Dr. Dennis A. Pickering, Associate Professor

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to present in some detail the description of a new Field-Based Curriculum Leadership Training Program which has been designed and implemented at Pittsburg State University. The program, which is in the sixth year of development, has as its primary purpose to help establish a new type of working relationship between the University and local schools in the area of curriculum development.

So often one finds that school districts will hire someone from the neighboring university to come in and guide them in a curriculum study. What often happens in such cases is that the leadership of the study is perceived by the staff to be in the hands of the university personnel. While the university personnel is present, the study progresses. As soon as the university personnel is no longer present, the study or its results begin to falter due to the lack of perceived leadership within the school district.

Program Goals and Beliefs

With the above situation in mind, the primary goals of the University in developing the new Field-Based Curriculum Leadership Training Program became:

1. To develop a cooperative program between local schools and the University so that the expertise of the University personnel could be used in such a way as to assist school administrators and staff personnel in enhancing their curriculum leadership skills while maintaining their designated local leadership roles.

2. To develop a program which provides a well articulated, well integrated series of curriculum leadership experiences which could be utilized in various size districts having different curricular needs.

With these two goals in mind, two years of systematic planning and four years of field testing have transpired in order to produce the ever developing curriculum leadership training program which Pittsburg State University now has.

The two fundamental beliefs that underlie the activities which take place throughout the training program are: (1) that curriculum development is a process of people development and (2) that the real curriculum constitutes what goes on when the classroom doors are closed. Throughout the training program, it is continually stressed that in order for significant human development changes to take place within a district, local leadership, both formal and informal*, must be in the active leadership role within their district. University personnel need to serve in a more supportive role of providing ideas and process skills which will in fact support and hopefully enhance the efforts of the local leadership.

Program Design

The program is designed to be implemented in three phases. Phase I consists of a series of administrative training sessions which focus in on sharpening the curriculum leadership skills of the formal local leadership.

Phase II consists of a series of training sessions for the informal leadership of the district. These sessions are conducted by the local formal leadership with the support of the University personnel.

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*Informal leadership is defined as those individuals who exert leadership over other staff personnel within a district but who do not possess a formal leadership title such as that of Supervisor, Principal, Assistant Superintendent, etc. In our work to date, those individuals identified as informal leaders often times have a greater influence than do the formal leaders in regards to changing other staff members' attitudes and behaviors related to curriculum matters.

Phase III, the Implementation Stage, is when both administrators and staff personnel trained in the previous two phases of the program now assume the major leadership roles in guiding other staff members in solving local curriculum problems. The University role at this time is totally in a supportive resource capacity. Attention by University personnel can now be turned to providing other types of services for the district since the district is no longer dependent upon the University for the fundamental curriculum leadership role of the past.

Administrative Training Sessions

The basic goals of the administrative training sessions are:

1. to enhance one's understanding of the fundamentals of curriculum planning.
2. to provide opportunities to utilize various curriculum development techniques.
3. to introduce various techniques which can be used for process and content evaluation.

The key idea of the entire administrative training session is to move the administrative staff from an individual development mode of behavior to a curriculum leadership team concept (see Figure 1). The process utilized to fulfill this desire centers upon the use of alternative teaching strategies, such as simulation, games, and group process skills, which stress the development of the individual and team attributes.

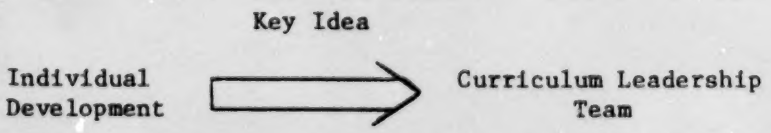


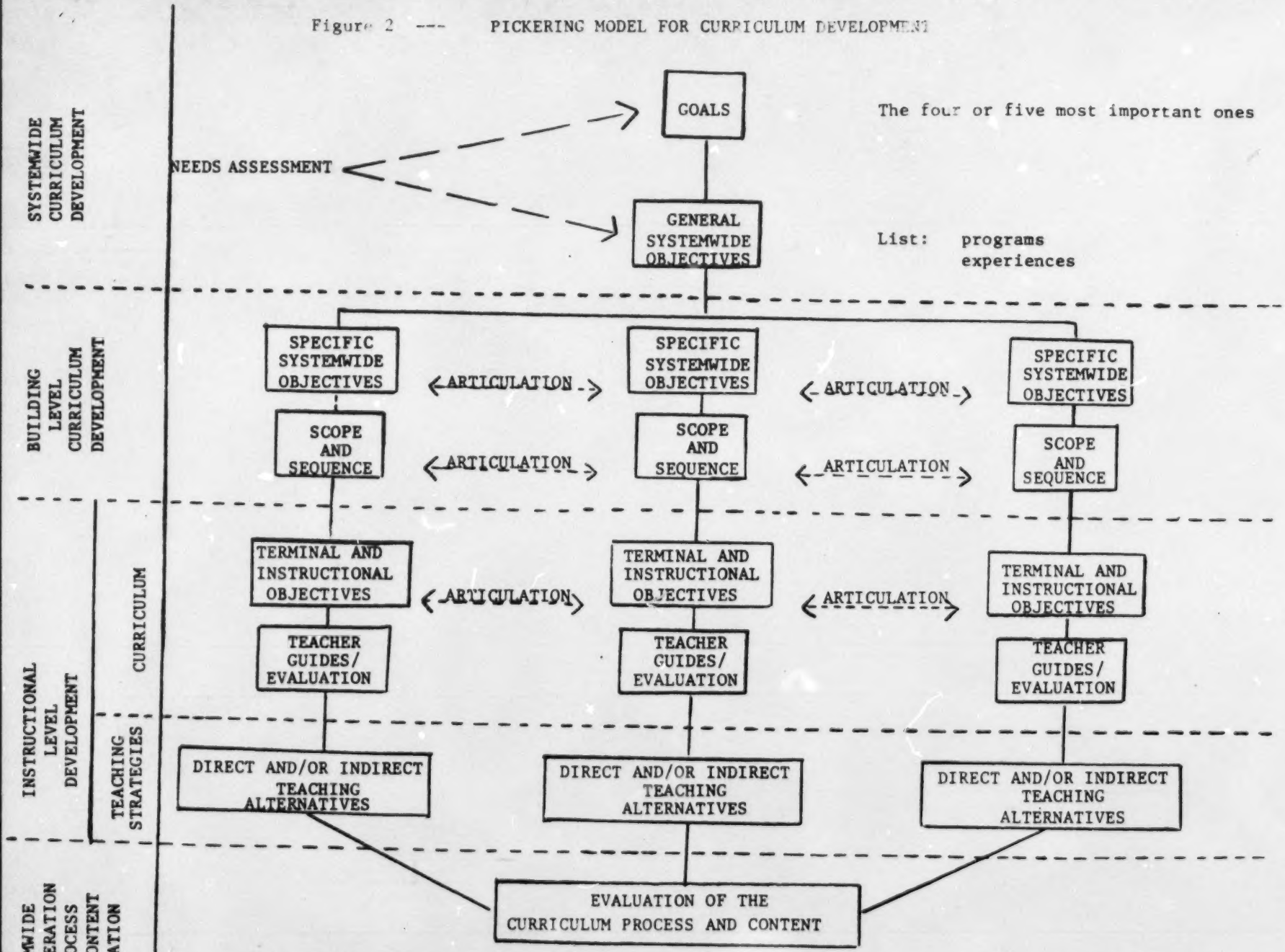
Figure 1.

Curriculum Model Development

A fundamental concern in the administrative training session is to sharpen curriculum skills through the use of group processes and alternative teaching strategies. An initial step in this process is to assist local administrators in developing a curriculum process model which will provide guidance in carrying out specific curricular projects within their district. In developing this aspect of the training program, an introductory model is presented for the administrative team's consideration (see Figure 2 -- Pickering Model for Curriculum Development).

As one can see, the model is divided into four areas: Systemwide Curriculum Development; Building Level Curriculum Development; Instructional Development; and Content and Process Evaluation. Attention in the administrative training session is given to developing one's ability to not only understand what takes place at each step, but how one might lead others in fulfilling such steps. Indepth consideration is given to how to carry out a needs assessment, establish systemwide goals, as well as to the formation of systemwide general objectives. Attention is also given to the formation of specific systemwide objectives (building objectives) as well as to the development and articulation of scope and sequence K-12. The writing, classification, and analysis of terminal and instructional objectives are then considered. Attention to alternatives to the traditional curriculum guide are also explored in light of what seems to make the greatest impact upon the instructional program within a classroom. Through

Figure 2 --- PICKERING MODEL FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



Developed by Dr. Dennis A. Pickering, Pittsburg State University, 1976. Revised 1978.

the use of learning centers, learning packets, as well as mini-presentations. participants learn how to utilize the goals, objectives, and guides established in order to meet the learning style attributes of students within their schools.

After the completion of the instructional development phase, attention is then turned to process and content evaluation. Process evaluation has to do with the systematic procedures one can use in assessing the changing attitudes and behaviors of the participants involved in the curriculum development process. Content evaluation has to do with the traditional assessment procedures which take place in order to determine the effectiveness of the program based upon the goals and objectives originally established.

Once the participants have experienced all the steps of the introductory model, systematic consideration is then given to developing a process model which will work for the local district.

Other Considerations

Along with the routine matters of curriculum development skills, a great deal of attention is also given to such areas and issues as group process skills, informal power, communication skills, the processes involved in the adoption of new ideas, as well as time management.

Through a series of packaged materials, as well as in-district activities, participants enhance their skills in being able to identify and utilize their knowledge of informal leadership within the community, school, and classroom. It is through such skills that key faculty, community influentials, as well as student leaders, are identified for the purpose of inclusion in the study at the second and third phases.

Through a series of group and individual activities, participants then focus attention upon the use of mass and individual communication skills. The impact of various types of communication is considered. The interrelationship of informal power and the use of proper communication techniques are emphasized.

Along with the above areas of model building, informal power, and communication, a segment of time in the administrative session is spent on the ideas and concepts of planned change. Consideration is given to the five fundamental steps of the adoption of new ideas. Attention is also given to the differences in the rate of adoption of new ideas within a district and how knowing such information may be helpful in providing a balance in your staff as well as to assist administrators in utilizing their energies in promoting the most productive educational ends within their school districts.

Recently the area of time management was added to the administrative training sessions. So often administrators, especially middle management, would say that they agree with all the things advocated in the training sessions but "how does one have time to do them?" "If only I had more time." All of us have the same amount of time, it is how we use it. Therefore, consideration is given to how to set priorities, plan on a short-term and long-term basis, and to organize and delegate to get the jobs done. As the sessions evolve, most administrators find that through the implementation of the fundamentals of time management presented, they are able to handle the issues of curriculum leadership within their schools quite well.

Planning Sessions

As a culmination to the Phase I Administrative Training Session, a period of time is set aside for the administrative team to address themselves to the

short-term goals and procedures of how to conduct an informal leadership training program as well as to the long-term goals and procedures of what should be taking place in the area of staff development and curriculum development within the next two to five years. These planning sessions tend to be initially rather slow in evolving but as the group develops more cohesiveness, the process of group planning becomes increasingly more beneficial.

Informal Leadership Training Sessions

Upon completion of the administrative training sessions, one is ready to move to Phase II which consists of a series of orientation and planning sessions for the informal leadership within the district. The fifteen to twenty percent of the instructional staff identified as informal leaders in the administrative training sessions constitute those individuals who will be involved in the Phase II training program. The basic goals of this series of orientation and planning sessions are:

1. to enhance the curriculum skills of the informal leadership within a school since these individuals are often times the ones who will either make or break you when making curricular changes within a school or district.
2. to provide opportunities for school administrators to "test" their developing skills.
3. to develop plans and prototype materials for dealing with local curricular concerns.

Procedures

Throughout the informal leadership training sessions, the emphasis is on allowing the administrative staff to assume the major leadership role. It is

through this means that we can begin to develop the perception that the administrators within the district are the educational leaders.

Attention in the actual sessions is placed upon introducing the staff leadership to the agreed upon model formulated in the administrative training sessions. Indepth work is done in developing skills in the area of scope and sequence construction and articulation. Attention is also paid to alternatives to the traditional curriculum guide formats.

The informal leadership training session culminates in a series of informal leader-administrator planning sessions which emphasize the formation of agreed upon short-term and long-term goals for the district in the area of curriculum development. Initially, this planning session has proven to be a rather challenging step in the three phase process but the ultimate outcomes warrant the effort.

Implementation

The final phase of the program consists of the implementation phase. Attention at this stage is given to the fulfillment of the following goals:

1. To systematically address an identified local curricular issue.
2. To utilize formal and informal leadership within the district to guide staff in solving the identified curricular issues.

Procedures

The actual procedures utilized by the local leadership, both informal and formal, will vary depending upon what the district personnel perceives to

be the most important issue to address themselves to initially. Some examples of issues initially addressed by the leadership include:

a. To work on improving articulation between subject areas as well as articulation K-12 within a subject area.

b. To focus on reassessing and designing a science and social science program K-12. This included not only the statement of goals, objectives, scope and sequence, as well as teacher guides, but attention to the procedures for selecting appropriate materials and methodologies, as well as evaluation procedures.

c. To focus on the transition periods between elementary and junior high (or middle school) and between junior high (middle school) and senior high school.

Dissemination

The Field-Based Curriculum Leadership Training Program has been conducted in numerous districts within a three state area within the past four years. The evaluation and the outcomes from the program to date have been most encouraging.

The entire three phase program normally consists of the following breakdown of contact time.

Phase I - Administrative Training Sessions

a. 30-40 contact hours

b. Sessions are normally spread over several weeks or months so that the administrators have the opportunity of "testing" their newly developing ideas.

Phase II - Informal Leadership Training Program

a. 25-35 contact hours

b. Usually spread over several weeks and/or months for purposes of assimilating the material.

Phase III - Implementation

Time block varies due to the type of issue initially addressed.

Along with the above full-fledged program, an awareness workshop for administrators and key staff personnel has been designed. This workshop is done on a three or four day basis with the participants meeting for approximately 6-7 hours per day for a total of 18-28 contact hours. In this workshop, attention can be given to the fundamentals of the process. Development of all skills in all areas of the process does not normally occur in such a short period of time.

If you are interested in further information concerning the program, please feel free to write or call: Dr. Dennis A. Pickering, Program Coordinator, School of Education, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas 66762. The area code is 316: 231-7000, Ext. 297.